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International Life Skills Survey

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING

16 June 1999

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DRAFT MINUTES

1.   Introduction

1.   The Chair, Mr. Jean-Pierre Voyer, welcomed participants and reported, for those who had not attended, that the Information Meeting on the International Life Skills Survey held on 15 June had revealed considerable interest in the project but also a desire for more precise information on cost and timelines for the next phases of the project.

2.   Roles and responsibilities

2.   In introducing the discussion of the roles of the various groups in ILSS, Mr Voyer suggested that there were four dimensions to the role of the Project Advisory Group:

−   intellectual - as guardians for the consumers;

−   financial - ensuring funding for the international and national work;

−   political - working together to broaden support for the project; and

−   spiritual - as advocates for the project.

3.   Mr Murray, Statistics Canada, then outlined more generally the manner in which it was intended that the project be managed. He said that what was needed was a management structure that would protect countries' interests, given that ILSS would be expensive and would be working at the edge of what was possible in the measurement of adult competencies. He said that there were scientific and management risks that would have to be minimised.

Development and design

4.   Mr Murray referred to the role of Statistics Canada (StatCan) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the US Department of Education in developing the project and in funding the work to date, with StatCan managing the project and NCES managing instrument development. He described ILSS as based on a commercial model, in contrast with the democratic model of PISA, but emphasised that what ILSS offered to potential investors was a 'malleable' product still in development, with about half of the item development work done.

International co-ordination

5.   Mr Murray said that StatCan and NCES had sought a strategic partnership with the OECD in managing the project because of the value OECD attached to empirical investigations, OECD's capacity to

use the results of such work in policy analysis, its capacity to build multinational support and its record in the use and dissemination of the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).

Management infrastructure

6.   The Project Advisory Group would have one representative from each participating country and the OECD Secretariat, plus the four members of the International Management Team.

7.   Mr Murray reported that NCES and StatCan had established International Instrument Development Teams that were working on the frameworks and the pool of items for each domain of assessment. The members of these teams came from a wide variety of countries, including OECD member countries not planning to participate in ILSS at this stage and non-OECD member countries. Mr Murray indicated that nominations of additional experts would be invited from participating countries.

8.   Each participating country would need to appoint a National Project Manager and it was suggested that they be supported by national steering or advisory committees.

Contractors engaged by NCES and Statistics Canada

9.   Mr Murray reported that NCES and StatCan had engaged Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop the design and scaling methods for the study; Westat to design and develop the Background Questionnaire and the Institute for International Education at the University of Stockholm to assist with analysis of data and drafting of the reports.

Quality Assurance Expert Group

10.   Mr Murray discussed the need for strong quality assurance mechanisms for the project, including:

   −   development of guidelines for quality control within countries;

   −   specification of the data to be gathered with which to demonstrate, after the fact, the quality of the data gathered;

   −   conduct of real-time audits of data gathering to permit intervention to fix problems;

   −   review of the data sets after collection.

11.   Mr Murray reported that StatCan and NCES had engaged a group of world-renowned experts to serve on the Quality Assurance Expert Group. He indicated that others could be invited to join this group but emphasised that they should be of international renown in a relevant field.

Other international organisations

12.   Mr Murray observed that some other international agencies had supported aspects of the work in IALS and that the possibility of similar involvement was being kept open for ILSS.

Issues raised

13.   The question of whether the relationship of ILSS and PISA instrumentation could be managed in a way that achieved economies was raised. Ms Binkley said that the connections were informal but were strong in literacy where common personnel were involved in the teams for both projects. Nevertheless, separate instrumentation was being developed for each project.

14.   Clarification was sought on the role that the University of Stockholm would play in the analysis and writing of reports. Mr Tuijnman said that this would involve data analyses and drafting of policy reports within the overall process of analysis and reporting that would be undertaken and managed by the OECD in collaboration with Statistics Canada.

15.   Clarification was sought of the extent to which there were real possibilities for national involvement in the development of the project and its assessment materials. Ms Binkley and Mr Murray said that National Project Managers and their national expert groups would need to review the overall framework for the project to determine whether it would be culturally appropriate as intended. There would be only a limited opportunity to influence the overall framework though there were outstanding questions to be resolved about how some areas, such as team work and information and communication technology literacy, would be assessed and whether practical cognition would be part of the final framework.

  −   The possibility of extending a national survey to investigate additional national issues was raised and it was observed that such variations could be accommodated provided the guidelines for the national sample for ILSS were not breached. Over-sampling of subpopulations of interest was one possibility raised, a survey of workplaces another.

3.   Roles of national teams

16.   Mr Tuijnman briefed participants on the roles and tasks of national teams. He noted that the tasks to be undertaken would include:

  −   preparation of a detailed national planning report, including costing of the national survey;

  −   recruitment of experts to review the overall ILSS framework and to contribute draft assessment tasks and items with the frameworks finally established for each part;

  −   preparation of a national sampling plan in accordance with the project guidelines;

  −   translation of assessment material from an English source version which would be established for all materials regardless of their language of origin;

  −   data collection;

  −   data capture (which is a matter to be considered in some detail by an international meeting of National Project Managers to see if non-paper methods could be used to reduce costs);

  −   scoring of responses;

  −   building of data files;

– preparation of reports, both draft materials for inclusion in the international report and reports for multiple national audiences.

17. Mr Tuijnman emphasised that National Project Managers should have both political and scientific guidance and support.

18. Mr Tuijnman concluded by listing the following obligations for national teams:

– agreement to adhere to the design specifications prescribed internationally;

– documentation of national actions;

– provision of national contribution to international overheads;

– assumption of the cost of hosting at least one meeting (e.g. the PAG or an expert group).

4. Implementation schedule

19. Mr Murray outlined the following schedule:

–	23-24 August 1999	Team leaders meeting at ETS to review the results of the feasibility work undertaken to date and to prepare recommendations for the first meeting of National Project Managers;
–	23-24 September 1999	First meeting of National Project Managers, Luxembourg, for a detailed briefing on all aspects of the study design, including the instruments and the background questionnaire;
–	October - December 1999	Item development for the Prose Literacy, Document Literacy and Numeracy tests in terms of established frameworks (with item pools to be completed by early 2000 for submission to US and Canadian national review processes, national reviews of frameworks for other domains);
–	April 2000	DEADLINE for countries wanting to participate in the first round of ILSS to sign on;
–	January - June 2000	Review of national planning reports, item development for problem solving, question development for information and communication technology literacy and team work;
–	January - March 2001	Pilot studies in all participating countries with 1300 completed cases;
–	January - June 2002	Main study with 7000 cases in each country.

20. Mr Murray emphasised that, even under this schedule, there would be no international data or report available until 2004.

5.   Quality assurance in the ILSS

21.   Mr Murray presented further detail on the work to be undertaken by the Quality Assurance Expert Group that has been commissioned to:

- review the methodological literature on quantitative international comparative studies;

- provide recommendations on:

  - sampling;

  - what interviewers should say;

  - the possibility of using incentives for respondents;

  - training of interviewers;

  - scoring of responses;

  - translation;

  - sanctions that should be imposed if quality assurance protocols are breached.

22.   Mr Murray emphasised that the decisions on whether to accept the various recommendations of the Quality Assurance Expert Group would need to be based on both scientific and pragmatic considerations to ensure that the protocols adopted are both methodologically sound and practical. The recommendations would be discussed by the National Project Managers but the final decision on what quality assurance protocols are adopted would be made by the Project Advisory Group.

23.   Ms Binkley described the approach to translation that is being considered after review of the procedures followed in studies by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), IALS and PISA. She emphasised that translation will focus on the intent of the item, with item developers being asked to provide maps making clear what is involved in answering correctly in the source language.

6.   Clarification of study design and instrumentation

24.   Ms Binkley reported on the current state of development of the instruments:

- Literacy

  - the frameworks for Prose Literacy and Document Literacy in IALS are being used;

  - international teams representing multiple language groups have been recruited to develop new test items;

  - no feasibility testing is planned since the frameworks have been used already in IALS and, with some adaptation, in PISA;

- Numeracy

  - the framework has been developed by an international team representing multiple language groups and including expertise in adult learning;

  - prototypical items have been developed but many more are needed;

  - feasibility studies are being undertaken with the prototypical items in the USA and the Netherlands;

- Problem Solving

  - the framework and sample tasks have been developed at the Institute for Educational Research in Bonn, Germany;

  - the development team is specifying the crucial elements in each item;

  - feasibility studies are being undertaken in Germany and the US;

  - qualitative observational studies are being undertaken in French-speaking Switzerland with adults completing the problem solving tasks.

- Team Work

  - prototypical items have been developed

  - feasibility studies are being undertaken in Canada and Sweden;

  - more input is needed since there is particular concern that the current items are too culturally specific;

- Information and Communication Technology Literacy

  - work on this instrument is at a preliminary stage, without a clear framework yet having been developed;

- Practical Cognition

  - this instrument arises from research on tacit knowledge in a restricted number of domains;

  - feasibility studies have been undertaken in the USA and Spain;

−   the framework is being redeveloped;

−   options for this instrument, apart from inclusion in the battery for the full ILSS, include maintaining it as a national option or dropping it altogether.

7.   Budget

International overheads

25.   Mr Murray provided the following details of the per-country budget for international overheads, noting that these were marginal, independent of the number of countries that participated.

ILSS International Overheads per Country (US$)

Activity	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	Total
ILSS Management Group	4 500	4 000	4 000		12 500
Background Questionnaire Development	10 000				10 000
Assessment Development	60 000	10 000			70 000
Processing of results		35 000	85 000		120 000
Quality Assurance Expert Team	12 500	12 500	12 500		37 500
International and Technical Reports				50 000	50 000
Total	87 000	61 500	101 500	50 000	300 000

26.   Mr Murray advised that, while the detail in the table indicated a payment schedule over four years for the per-country total of $(US)300 000, alternative arrangement could be negotiated with Statistics Canada to which the contributions to international overheads would be paid. Statistics Canada would satisfy accountability requirements by providing financial reports to the PAG on expenditure against the financial overheads and would also provide countries with reports in a form that met national requirements.

National study costs

27.   Mr Murray said that, in IALS, national survey costs had varied from costs per respondent of $(US)25 to $(US)300. He suggested that, for countries that participated in IALS, the best source of estimates of costs for ILSS would be the per-respondent IALS costs, though the total would be higher than for IALS because of the more extensive assessments and the consequentially larger sample of respondents.

28.   Mr Murray said that items to be considered in developing a budget for the national survey were:

−   national team at 4x4 person years (manager, statistician, data analyst, operations person);

−   development of country application for computer managed interview (to be developed from an international version of the Background Questionnaire in the BLAISE software that is widely used internationally for this kind of application);

−   adaptation and translation of instruments (with most of this expenditure to be incurred in the Pilot phase since the items for the Main survey would come, with at most minor modifications, from the pool of items for the Pilot);

−   interviewer training (8 hours for someone already experienced in conducting household surveys but needing training in the administration of the assessment components of ILSS);

− interviews (1½ hours per interview + travel + time for follow-up of non-respondents, at least to collect the demographic information required for a study of response bias);

− data capture and editing;

− scoring (15 minutes per case + provision for national rescore of 10% of cases + provision for international rescore of 300 cases);

− national reporting.

8. Next steps

International Management Team

29. The international management team, consisting of T. Scott Murray (Statistics Canada), Marilyn Binkley, (National Center for Education Statistics), Albert Tuijnman (University of Stockholm) and Tom Healy (OECD) will continue to manage the development of the project. In the immediate future, they will:

− prepare for use in countries considering participation in ILSS:

    − a policy rationale for participation, indicating the kinds of policy issues for which ILSS results would be relevant, and including a rationale for the required sample size;

    − a revised planning document to guide national preparation of a plan for the national survey within ILSS;

    − a template for estimating costs of the national survey;

− provide countries with the details of the current membership of the following groups (by posting details on the ILSS web page http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/ILSS.html, as shown in the ILSS Prospectus, or http://nces.ed.gov/ILSS) and invite them to nominate experts to serve on them (with countries to meet the costs of their nominated experts in the case of all except the Quality Assurance Expert Group):

    − Quality Assurance Expert Group;

    − Literacy Assessment Development Team;

    − Numeracy Assessment Development Team;

    − Problem Solving Assessment Development Team

    − Information and Communication Technology Literacy Assessment Development Team;

    − Team Work Assessment Development Team;

    − Practical Cognition Assessment Development Team;

    − Background Questionnaire Development Team;

− prepare a recommended membership for Quality Assurance Expert Group from current membership and nominations received for presentation to the Project Advisory Group for final determination.

OECD Secretariat

30.   The OECD Secretariat will continue to provide the international co-ordination of the project and manage the work of the Project Advisory Group. In the immediate future, it will:

− distribute the French language version of the ILSS Prospectus;

− prepare and distribute Minutes of the PAG meeting;

− invite countries to nominate a member of the Project Advisory Group;

− prepare reports on ILSS developments for the OECD Education Committee and the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee;

− write to Ministers if requested to do so.

Countries

31.   Representatives from 13 countries indicated that they expected their country to be represented at the First Meeting of National Project Managers to be held in Luxembourg on 23-24 September 1999 in order to commit to participation in the Round 1 of ILSS, or to keep open the option of commitment.

32.   Countries should:

− make a decision by April 2000 on whether to participate in Round 1;

− request a national information meeting if one were wanted to present details of ILSS to key national policy makers;

− if having already decided to participate or wanting to keep that option open:

− nominate one representative to the Project Advisory Group;

− appoint a National Project Manager or a proxy to attend the First National Project Managers Meeting in Luxembourg on 23-24 September 1994;

− nominate experts who might serve on the Quality Assurance Expert Group, the International Assessment Development Teams and the Background Questionnaire Development Team and meet the costs of any nominated expert appointed to a team;

− advise Barry McGaw in the OECD Secretariat (email: barry.mcgaw@oecd.org or fax: +33 1 44 30 61 71) of any nominations.

Project Advisory Group

33.   The Project Advisory Group will be responsible for major policy decisions for the project. At this point, the Group will need, out of session, to:

  −   determine membership of Quality Assurance Expert Group

9.   Further meetings

34.   It was suggested that further meetings of the Project Advisory Group be scheduled for:

  June 2000

  September 2001

  2003 following main study.